

Letters

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try. Relative to the Atomic Energy Commission, the Public Health Service, or the Armed Services, it has been, however, starved of funds. I believe that the National Science Foundation is more likely to come into its own and receive the support it deserves if it is a part of a department of the government headed by an officer of cabinet rank.

The size of the research program of the United States Public Health Service is, of course, largely due to the intense interest of the public and of Congress in matters related to health, but I think the program has also been strengthened by the fact that the United States Public Health Service is part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and has a cabinet officer with the departmental organization behind him to speak on its behalf. The actual function of the National Science Foundation, with respect to the support of scientific research, should involve support of research over a much wider area than that of the Public Health Service, since it includes the whole realm of fundamental research in the physical and biological sciences, with overlapping into the area of medicine and social sciences. I believe that the National Science Foundation will stand a better chance of growing to its proper stature as part of a federal department headed by an officer of cabinet rank than it would as a separate and isolated agency.

This criticism, of course, deals with only one aspect of Berkner's proposals, which in general I would endorse wholeheartedly. I hope that his powerful and convincing article will receive the attention it deserves from scientists throughout the country—and from the politicians.

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Philanthropy

I confess that I was jarred by the editorial, "How to be generous cheaply" [*Science* 129, 805 (1959)]. I am aware of the fact that many pleas for philanthropy are supported primarily by the argument that "you can deduct it from your income tax." But I had not expected the AAAS to be promoting a considered plan for the encouragement of such practice.

Basically, the editorial is an expression of distrust in the capacity of the Federal Government—which is all of us—to

make wise expenditures of its tax receipts. Better, the editorial says, to create a condition in which each individual has increased latitude to decide for himself the social causes and institutions (privately operated and controlled) which he cares to support.

I believe such thinking is headed in the wrong direction. If we traveled far enough along this road, disaster could overtake us. Granted that the Government sometimes does not spend wisely, it does not follow that private, individual judgments in "giving" are certain to be formed in the public interest. Private

philanthropy has often been irresponsible and wasteful.

Certainly, citizens should have reasonable encouragement to form and to support private, volunteer organizations for religion, education, and charity. But the primacy of the larger society should not be undermined. AAAS members should understand this principle better than any other group and not become just another pressure group out to shoot a few more holes in the income tax.

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